

Information Sheet
Removing Conference Operating Policies and Procedures from the NELAC Standard
June 25, 2004
NELAC Board of Directors (BoD)

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are a number of provisions presently contained in the NELAC Standard which apply to the operation of NELAC as a conference and do not apply to the accreditation of laboratories.

II. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

- The NELAC Standard must be a uniform standard used by accrediting authorities to accredit laboratories and contain only those requirements that directly affect the certification of laboratories.
- NELAC, as a conference, must have policies and procedures that govern its administrative operations.
- These administrative operations are not relevant to the accreditation of laboratories.
- NELAC Bylaws, Article IV, Section 2.B. states, "The Board of Directors establishes administrative procedures and policies, and serves as the policy and coordinating body in matters of national and international significance."
- From the inception of NELAC, all aspects of NELAC operations have been included in the NELAC Standard. This did not present a problem until the conference was reorganized into a standards adoption body exclusively. In the opinions of some, NELAC then became constrained in its ability to revise and develop policies and procedures for its own internal use.
- The NELAC BoD requested that a special committee review the NELAC Standard to identify those aspects of the current standard which are clearly operational policies and procedures of NELAC and as such, are not relevant to the accreditation of laboratories.
- Some members are concerned that NELAC, with its reorganization to a standards adoption body versus a standards development body, is constrained in the changes it can make on its own initiative.

III. CONCLUSION

- The special committee, given the concerns of some members about separating portions of the standard, chose to take a conservative approach and identified only those provisions in the current standard that the membership could unanimously agree were clearly NELAC operating policies and procedures.
- It is generally accepted and imperative that an organization have control over its administrative policies and procedures.
- After a review of the NELAC Constitution and Bylaws, attorneys affiliated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) confirmed that the NELAC BoD is given the authority to establish administrative policies and procedures on behalf of the Conference.

IV. DECISIONS

1. The NELAC BoD has created the “Supplemental Information” to serve as the repository for the exact language from the existing NELAC Standard that has been identified by the Board or a Special Committee as applying to the operation of NELAC as a conference. The NELAC BoD will propose to strike these sections from the current NELAC Standard at the upcoming Annual Meeting.
2. The NELAC BoD has developed policies and procedures that capture the essential administrative functions referenced in the language now proposed to be stricken from the standard. The NELAC BoD has developed a document titled, "Road Map Between the Supplemental Information and Policies/Procedures/Standard Operating Procedures" that contains the policies, procedures and standard operating procedures developed from the language now found in the Supplemental Information. This document will be located on the NELAC website on the home page under “Policies”.
3. The NELAC Chair will call for a vote of the membership to confirm or reject the recommendations of the NELAC BoD regarding the removal of those provisions from the NELAC Standard that have been determined by the BoD or a Special Committee to be clearly and generally accepted as NELAC operating policies and procedures.
4. The NELAC BoD will continue to review the NELAC Standard to determine if other, less apparent, provisions still remain in the existing Standard that address NELAC administrative policies and procedures and as such, must be removed from the NELAC Standard. When necessary, the NELAC BoD will make the pertinent recommendations to the Conference at the next scheduled Annual Meeting.